

THE

ל'פמ"א

# SHEKEL



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**Anglo-Palestine Bank - 1907**

# OUR ORGANIZATION

AMERICAN ISRAEL NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION

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The AMERICAN ISRAEL NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION is a cultural and educational organization dedicated to the study and collection of Israel's coinage, past and present, and all aspects of Judaica Numismatica. It is a democratically organized, membership oriented group, chartered as a non-profit association under the laws of the State of New York.

As an educational organization, the primary responsibility is the development of programs, publications, meeting and other activities which will bring news, history, technical, social and related background to the study of numismatics. Membership is open to all men and women of goodwill and to clubs who share the common goals of the Association.

The Association is the publisher of THE SHEKEL, a six times a year journal and news magazine prepared for the enlightenment and education of the membership. It neither solicits or accepts advertising, paid or unpaid. Its views are the views and opinions of the writers and the pages and columns are open to all who submit material deemed by the editors to be of interest to the members.

The Association sponsors such major cultural/social/numismatic events as an annual Study Tour of Israel, national and regional conventions and such other activities and enterprises which will benefit the members.

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**PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
HENRY KRAMARZ**



## THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by MOE WEINSCHTEL

Dear Member,

The Morris Bram Memorial medal was shipped to all paid up members. The mintage on the silver is limited to 86 and the gold is limited to 12. By the time you read this we hope to be "SOLD OUT".

At the Seattle ANA Convention we represented IGCAMC and announced the ballot results for "The Most Beautiful Coin of Israel". The ballots were placed in a drum, and three prize winning names were drawn by ANA Pres., Ken Hallenbeck. Then A.I.N.A. presented a special plaque to Israel Government Coins and Medals Corp. for the "Most Beautiful Coin of Israel", the 1989 Jaffa coin. We also made a presentation of a set of the Morris Bram memorial medals to the ANA library and archives.

Quite a few members stopped by at the IGCAMC table to exchange greetings and chat about A.I.N.A.

Alex Shagin, Sculptor/Medalist and A.I.N.A. member, who was honored by the ANA as Outstanding Sculptor of the year, was also the designer and sculptor of our Morris Bram medal. He truly deserves the honor. We congratulate him.

Our Fall Convention was better than expected, despite the financial climate. We are now preparing for the Greater New York Spring Convention, May 1 to 4, 1991, and look forward to another rewarding show.

We take this opportunity to wish all a very Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year, with a special wish for Peace everywhere.

Shalom!

# Anglo-Palestine Bank Registered Checks

*by Edward Schuman*

A severe economic crisis hit the new Jewish town of Tel-Aviv at the beginning of World War I. The Turkish government decreed that high taxes be imposed on this Jewish community, monies needed for the war efforts. Unemployment was at an all time high. Every bank had been closed. The assets of the Anglo-Palestine Bank had been hidden since the bank was registered in England which was at war with Turkey. Money of any sort had disappeared from circulation.

A "Committee for Relieving the Crisis" was formed, and a decision to issue paper tokens was made. Four issues were printed between August 16th, 1914 and October 23rd of the same year. The Turkish government forcibly had these withdrawn, and inflicted severe punishment on the issuers. Turkish law strictly forbid the issuance of any kind of private currency, or money.

Despite the fact that it was an alien bank in Palestine, the Anglo-Palestine Bank had the utmost respect and the confidence of the people. In order to create some circulating monetary medium, the bank decided to issue "registered checks" in small denominations to alleviate the crisis. These checks were given to certain trustworthy people, who signed and distributed them in commerce. Since the bank had the highest respect in the community, these checks were accepted and held in the same esteem as the official banknotes.

They were issued in French Franc denominations. It must be realized, that during this period of Turkish Palestine, the currencies of many nations served as legal tender in commerce. It is also possible that by using a French denominated check, possibly the Turkish authorities would not object to their issuance.

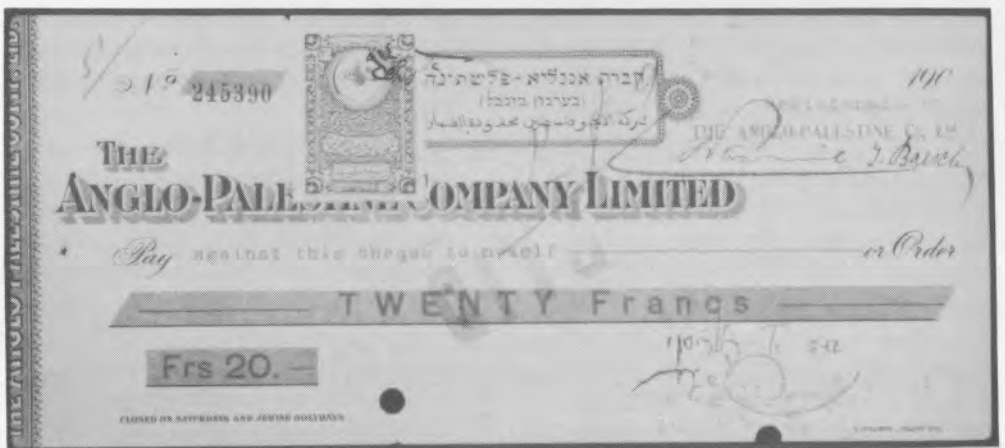
The denominations issued were 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 francs. In addition, these checks were hand signed by officers of the bank. As checks, a Turkish revenue stamp has been affixed to each check and cancelled. There is also a variety which has the Turkish revenue stamp preprinted on the check. The denomination which have been preprinted are either in Green or in Red ink. It is not known how many different "trustworthy people" signed these. Some have been signed in English, others in Hebrew. The Turkish authorities viewed these as checks, and did not force them to be withdrawn.

For many years, these were thought to have been almost unique. There is an auction record of \$3000.00 paid for one of these items. A couple have been noted in advanced Judaic numismatic collections.

It was the writer's good fortune to acquire the photographed grouping during our last trip to Israel. Only a ten franc denominated check is missing. However while there are two checks of 20 franc denomination, they have two different styles of denomination cancels. A 20 franc and a 50 franc check have Hebrew denomination cancels along with English. This would lead us to believe that there was two issues. In addition "Second Series" has been typewritten on the 100 franc check. This would lead us to believe that perhaps the first series were unmarked as such. While in most cases these are undated, the revenue stamp cancellation on the "second series 100 franc note is 4 Oct. 1914. A Sept. 1914 rubber stamp dates a 20 Franc check. Could this be the first series?

The first building of the Anglo-Palestine Bank in Jaffa, established in 1903 by the Jewish Colonial Trust. Courtesy Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.





Anyone with further information on these checks is kindly asked to contact the author.

# The ALEPH BETH Page

## ...Dedicated to the Beginner *by Edward Janis*

Q. I am both a member of AINA and B'nai Brith. I did not go to the convention in Jerusalem in 1959 so when I received the flyer from Israel Coins and Medals Co. Ltd. telling about the State Medal that was being struck during the Tenth Anniversary year in honor of both the convention and the government of Israel's birthday, I bought one in copper and one in silver. I made a note on the envelopes that I store the medals in, that the copper piece (cat. no. M506) had an issue of 10,000 and the silver medal (cat. no. 507) had a quantity of 5,000 pieces. Recently, I received a coin and medal list from a well known dealer of Israel coins and medals. Not that I'm going to buy another set of B'nai Brith but this dealer listed low mintages of 3,045 for the copper and 2,208 for the silver? Which is correct?

*Harry S., DDS, Philadelphia, PA*

A. When IGCAM receives an approval for a state medal or a commemorative coin such as an anniversary of Independence or a Chanukka coin, it publishes a brochure describing the contemplated issue showing the historical background, a description of the coin or medal, plus its metal, diameter, weight and quantity. This quantity is the MAXIMUM number of pieces that have been authorized to be struck. The sales campaign takes place; medals and coins are sold and residuals are stored in vaults. After a reasonable period, IGCAM informs the numismatic world that certain issues of medals and coins will no longer be available. AINA has recently informed its members with flyers and order forms on some of these issues. At a public ceremony the dies are defaced and the medals and coins are sent to the smelter and the metal reappears in other new issues. The meltdown were much greater in the early days. For example, Israel decided to strike Chanukka coins. Not having the minting facilities in 1958, after negotiations with a few foreign mints, Berne, Switzerland mint was chosen. In BU, the authorization was for 250,000 pieces. This was a new series. Nobody knew how it would sell at its issue price of \$1.35. Once the mint was set up for striking, there was very little cost differential between striking the whole 250,000 pieces and a small issue.

In the following year the Chanukka coin, again a one lira, honored the 50th Anniversary of Degania. Based on the sales in 1959 only 100,000 were struck in the Utrecht mint in the Netherlands. Half the issue remained unsold leaving a net mintage of 50,000. The third issue authorized by the Bank of Israel was the Henrietta Szold. The Bank, now experienced, turned out a total of 17000 as a maximum and only 3,000 proofs. Needless to say, with only 117 of the uncs destroyed and a final mintage of 16,883 and the small proof issue, the Szold pieces really went into orbit with the proof selling for in excess of \$600 at one time.

The dealer in his listing of mintage of your B'nai Brith medals gave the NET MINTAGE after destruction of the residue. These same figures are available in the Kagan "Israel's Money and Medals" Sylvia Haffner, Editor and is available from AINA.

# Henri Abraham: Physicist, Educator, Martyr

*by Peter S. Horvitz*

Although, since the conclusion of the Second World War, there have been a number of medals and coins issued to memorialize the victims of Nazi race hatred, either as a group or as individuals, I know of only one numismatic item issued in honor of a victim of the Holocaust actually struck during that person's lifetime. The item in question is a bronze plaquet issued in 1938 in honor of Prof. Henri Abraham, a Jew of France who had received great honor at the hands of his country. He was both an outstanding physicist and a well-beloved teacher of teachers. A hero of the mind, who made major contributions to the Allied cause in the First World War, he died a hero of the spirit who, refusing to save his life at the risk of others, was murdered at Auschwitz in 1943.

The story of Henri Abraham is well documented. His contributions to science and scientific education were numerous and important. His contributions to his native country during time of war resulted in his being made an officer of the Legion d' Honor with military title.

Henri Abraham's original contributions to physics were numerous and diverse. His most important contributions were in telegraphy, radio broadcasting, electronics, and navigation. Abraham verified Maxwell's electromagnetic theory of light and published his research in 1892. He invented the electrostatic voltmeter that bears his name. In 1914, he collaborated with General Ferrie and built the first electronic

tube constructed in France. He introduced the DeForest triode into France. The triode lamp had been invented in 1907 in the United States by Lee DeForest. However, the lamp was not safe for any use. Abraham, by his adaptations of the lamp, made it safe and adapted it for use to military telegraphy. Abraham's improved triode lamp was adopted during the First World War by all the allied countries, who gained thereby a decisive superiority to the enemy in transmission of military information. Abraham's triode also gave a start to the French radio electrical industry. After 1918, he worked extensively in the fields of radio communication and broadcasting. It was in recognition of Abraham's part in the Allied victory that Abraham was raised to the rank of officer of the Legion d'Honor in the military branch in July of 1918. Abraham also worked on the measurement of infinitesimal units of time, which was very important for determining longitude and latitude. It was Abraham who made the first accurate determination, between 1912 and 1914, of the difference in longitude between Paris and Washington. He also invented, with Eugène Bloch, in 1918, a multi-vibrator which was very important for electronics. Abraham was the author and editor of a number of important physics texts. He emphasized in his training of teachers the importance of experiments to bring about direct comprehension of phenomena.

Abraham was often recognized for his contributions during his lifetime. In 1900, he was placed in charge of the physics lab of the Ecole Normale Supérieure (Advanced Teacher's Training College,) the finest institution of its kind in France and a division of the Sorbonne. In 1912 he was appointed as professor of physics at the Ecole Normale Supérieure. He was secretary general of the French Society of Physics and then he was elected president of that society in 1922. He was also president of the French Society of Electronics and of the French Society of Chronometry. He was one of the founders of the Society of Radio Electricians. He served from 1934 to 1939 as the Secretary General of the International Union of Physics.

For more personal information regarding Prof. Abraham, we can turn to a letter written by Abraham's daughter, Germaine Abraham. This letter was written for the ceremony commemorating the centenary of Abraham's birth held at the Ecole Normale Supérieure on December 7, 1968:

"My father was born in Paris on July 12, 1868, the fifth of six children. He studied in the Chaptal High-School. Among the numerous gilt-edged books given as prizes to the 'student Abraham,' there was one which seemed particularly prophetic, *The Pneumatic Aero-Electric Telegraphic Systems* by Charles Bontemps.

"It's at Chaptal where my father, a day student, had the number 315, as his cup bears witness, the only memento of his youth that I still possess. It was also there that he prepared for the entrance exam for

the Ecole Normale Supérieure, where he was accepted as first on the list at the age of 18 in 1886.

"It is in that class of 1886 and in the adjacent classes that can be found the names of his friends Leon Bertrand, Robert Lespieau, Bernard Brunhes, Marmier, Als, Jules Lemoine (1884), Luc Picart (1885), and Sacerdote (1888).

"My father remained very close to the school and talked very often of the charming camaraderie that reigned there. He told us also about the 'Normalien spirit' and the peculiar students' jargon. Daughters of 'Archicube,' we were aware of what was a 'cacique,' a 'tapir,' or a 'thala.' And when it was time for the school ball, the austere physics lab was magically transformed and we dined gaily, as in the 'thurnes!'

"As for my father's career, I will remind you briefly of his college degrees and of the posts that he occupied:

1887 M.A. in Sciences.

1880 Aggregation.

1892 Doctorate.

1891 Professor at Chaptal High School.

1894-1900 Professor at Louis-le-Grand.

"It was at this last school that he succeeded a colleague with a chaotic class. The vice-principal introduced him to the students, who expected a little speech. But my father just said these words, 'Gentlemen, please take notes,' and he started his lesson immediately. There was no question of chaos.

"In 1900, he was assistant professor at Ecole Normale Supérieure, which he was not to leave. Then he was a professor at the Sorbonne delegated to the Ecole Normale

Supérieure and director of the physics lab of the Ecole Normale.

"Besides his work as a teacher and as a researcher, he was:

- Secretary of the French Society of Physics, where he succeeded Lucien Poincaré in 1900.

- President of the French Society of Electricians in 1920.

- President of the French Society of Chronometry in 1930.

- Founder, with General Ferrié, of the Society of Radio-Electricians.

"He was also secretary of the International Union of Physics in 1934.

"He was laureate of the Institute of France in 1905, 1917, 1927, 1930, and 1936.

"He was made a knight of the Legion of Honor in 1907, and promoted officer with military title in 1918.

"When he was sent to Washington to participate in the measurements of longitude, he held the honorary title of 'under-lieutenant of engineers,' a rank that seemed insufficient in regard to the mission that he was leading. He was thus awarded, temporarily, the rank of major, just for the time of his stay in the United States. But when he went to order his new uniform, he didn't know how many stripes he would need on his sleeve. This made the tailor suspicious and he called Military Security! No less than the help of his friend Painlevé, then Minister of War, was needed to extricate him from that tricky situation! We possess, by the way, a magnificent portrait of my father

at that time, where he had his arm forward, so that people could admire his provisional bands of rank.

"My father loved team work and one could not evoke his memory without mentioning his colleagues Eugène Bloch, Villard, Jules Lemoine, and Sacerdote.

"An upright and loyal man, he was hostile to the policies of favoritism. I was astonished one day to see him pretend to be writing the name of a candidate in his notebook. He explained. 'There is no question of my favoring him. The important thing is that he should believe that I will favor him. Then he will go to the exam with more assurance.'

"This is how he explained fractions to us. He cut up in front of us a delicious apple pie and asked us if we preferred to have  $\frac{1}{6}$  or  $\frac{1}{8}$ . If in absolute value we could have had a doubt, in 'apple pie units' the problem was instantly solved.

"He sometimes helped us with our homework and I remember a problem that was particularly difficult, of which he gave a clear and fast solution on which I still didn't get a good grade. The teacher had written in the margins, 'Exact, but the solution is too simple.'

"Of a cheerful temperament, he loved to joke. One day, quizzing me about history and asking me such hard questions as the date of the battle of Marignan or the coronation of Charlemagne, he added, asking mischievously, 'And what about the 12th of July, 1868?' I had drawn a blank. It was, of course, the day we remember today, his birthday.

"I could reminisce on and on from these familiar memories because the good humor of my father, as well as

his goodness, was inexhaustible. Never did people tell him about a misfortune, that he didn't try to alleviate it. If he was part of a selection committee, his voice always went to the most deserving candidate, even if he was on bad terms with him. Nothing could depict better my father than the words uttered by M. Eugene Bloch in 1939, on the occasion of his scientific jubilee, 'You are a great professor, a great scientist, and you are also a man of great character.'

"It is that man that the Germans came to arrest in Aix-en-Provence at 3:00 A.M. on June 23, 1943 at the age of 75, along with my eldest sister, whose two daughters, Mme. Legrain and Mme. Michel Bloch, orphans raised by my mother, are here today.

"That tragic end could have been avoided, but, faithful to himself, my father refused to shelter himself under false identity. Once arrested, he also refused to escape, to avoid reprisals against his friends in captivity.

"He was then deported to Auschwitz with my sister and deliberately assassinated on arrival at the camp and passed to the crematory fires. There is no grave for the departed and that, believe me, I will never forget nor forgive."

Further memories of Prof. Abraham as a teacher are provided by Maurice Ponte, a member of the Institute of France and a former student of the professor:

"I have on the subject of Prof. Abraham's teaching methods a personal recollection that shows the spirit of Henri Abraham in his favorite vocation, that of training teachers. During his preparation of

the aggregation, every one of us made a 'lesson' in front of his classmates, who were supposed to be a class of students. One of us had as a topic 'photography,' and he was so boring that we were rowdy as real students would have been. I can still hear Abraham say at the time of criticism, "X, you bored us terribly, your friends were rowdy and they were right. But don't forget that a teacher who lets chaos in once is a dead teacher. You must transfer him, his reputation proceeds him, there is nothing else to do.' What a beautiful example of understanding of students.

"Abraham was a born teacher. His lessons at the Ecole Normale were fascinating and nobody missed them. Built on a few notes, they were alert, provoking questions and of a personal intensity. During our aggregation year, he told us, 'A teacher must "perform" his lesson. He is an actor. Don't bore your students. That's what they would forgive the least!' He was also the one who warned us against ideas and solutions that would be costly when talking about the price of apparatus. He was still under the influence of his studies and discoveries in radio electricity during the 1914-1918 War, which with those of Eugene Bloch, Leon Bloch, Jouhaux, and Ferrié gave to France a supremacy in that field.

"His critiques of the aggregation lessons, together with those of Eugène Bloch, which were very different, were very fruitful and frightening, because they hit their target under a pleasant form. I have already quoted one and I remember another on photometry, which I was presenting. This lesson

had given me a great deal of trouble and I backed it with many experiments which I had prepared at length at the lab and in what remained of the collections, which were open night and day. After my presentation, my friends were speechless, without any criticism. I can still hear Abraham telling me with that authority that he wrapped in good humor, 'Ponte, you have given us a splendid lesson.' Then there was a moment of silence. 'I didn't understand a word of it.' And, of course, he was right, because having found evidence that lighting varies in the inverse ratio of the square of the distance, I had forgotten to define the intensity of a source.

"Abraham, in charge of theses, was the type of director who only intervened when asked by the candidate when he is so desperate that he thinks that he will never accomplish anything. His advice was always encouraging, marked by authority and common sense. That was a time when the funds for research were skeleton-like. One day, when I had seen rings of diffractions of electrons from zinc-oxide, my high voltage source, an old Secheron machine from the Eiffel Tower, had a caprice and broke. All my hopes were flown! But when Abraham heard of my distress, he insisted, 'We must have a modern source. Tell me how much it will cost. I don't have a sou to pay for it, but we will manage.'

"It was also Abraham, we must remember, who fought effectively from the beginning to get Germany to take its place back in the International Union of Physics, from which it had been kept out as a

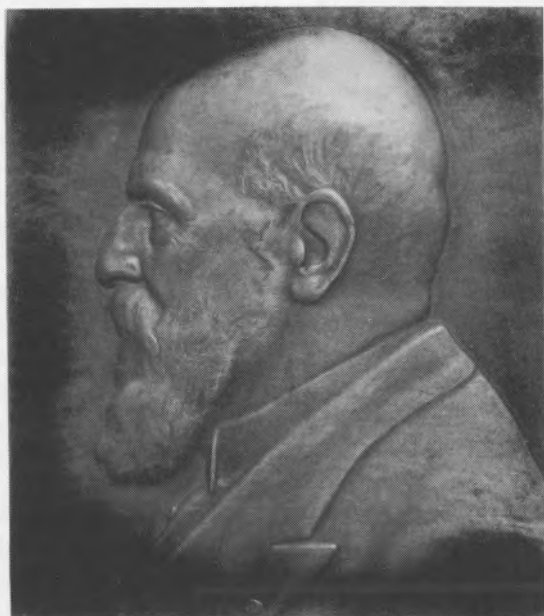
consequence of the 1914-1918 War.

"These few memories tell why we loved our director, who also loved us."

Another of Prof. Abraham's student's, Pierre Grivet, gives us this brief portrait of Abraham:

"This exemplary activity of researcher and professor, Abraham pursued with serenity, brilliance, and efficacy in the thirties. To the beginning and advanced students of that time, M. Abraham always had a smiling, almost fraternal, welcome. His face gave an impression of natural authority, but a certain kindness tempered the majesty of his white beard. The glow and vivacity and the brilliant intelligence of his look would have sufficed to insure him an unquestioned authority. But all, before meeting the 'master,' having just registered, came into contact, on that November day, with the insignia of his command, his imposing fur coat with the astrakhan collar. It was hung outside his office, whose door was always ajar, close to the Physics Laboratory. The coat had the power of magic and its presence alone was enough to make harmony reign in the laboratory and spared our master the need of ever having to raise his voice."

Following the German invasion of France, Henri Abraham left Paris for Bordeaux, then Toulouse. Finally, he settled in Aix-en-Provence. In 1942, the Germans invaded the Free Zone. They discovered and arrested Abraham, on June 25, 1943, and brought him to Marseille, accompanied by one of his daughters, who did not want to leave her sick father. On December 7, the prisoners were taken away by the Germans



The Henri Abraham Medal

and their family was never to have any further direct news of them. It is only known that after a brief stay in Drancy, they were again taken away to Auschwitz. Abraham must have been gassed on arrival. His daughter, less fortunate, suffered a few more weeks at Auschwitz before her death.

I have tried to be as detailed as possible in this account, even at the cost of possible repetition, for this very important story, as far as I have been able to determine has never been told in English. Even in French, this story is difficult to come by and little known. I'd like to express my sincerest thanks to Pierre Petitmengin, librarian of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, who generously supplied the documentary evidence from which this account has been constructed.

The medal issued to honor Prof. Abraham was issued in 1938 on the occasion of his being honored by the staff and students of the Ecole Normale Supérieure. The medal is in the form of a plaquette, measuring 72 millimeters by 60 millimeters. The medal is bronze and this is so indicated on the edge, along with a cornucopia, the mark of the Paris Mint, which produced the medal. The obverse shows a portrait of the professor facing left. He is wearing a suit and tie. In his buttonhole is the insignia of the Legion of Honor. The only inscription on this side is the name of the artist, MORLON, running along the left side. The reverse shows Minerva, the goddess of Wisdom, facing right and wearing a helmet and holding a shield. She is seen as through a window, with the background divided into three sections. The background of

Minerva consists of lightning bolts, presumably representing physics, and two branches of bay, representing celebration. Beneath this figure appears this inscription, A HENRI ABRAHAM PROFESSEUR A LA SORBONNE. L'ECOLE NORMALE SUPERIEURE. SES AMIS. SES ELEVES. 1938 or "To Henri Abraham, Professor of the Sorbonne. The Ecole Normale Supérieure. His Friends. His Students. 1938."

The artist who produced this medal, Pierre Alexandre Morlon, was a leading French medalist of the early part of the twentieth century. He produced numerous portrait medals, but he is particularly remembered for his patriotic pieces depicting France in the incarnation of Gallia. His most famous medal is probably the French First World War Victory Medal.

Without having committed any crime, without having been tried, without having been found guilty by a judge or a jury of any crime, without having been sentenced, Henri Abraham, a man who had enriched the lives of all he came in contact with and who had faithfully served his country, was untimely executed.

The magnitude of the tragedy of the Holocaust can not be comprehended in a single glance, at the writing of a number, even a vast number. That vast number is in itself meaningless. It can only be understood in terms of digestible units, like Mlle. Abraham's "apple pie units." Such units were Prof. Abraham, his eldest daughter, his associate Eugène Bloch, Anne Frank, and all the rest. The key number is one, the number one counted over and over again, six million times.

# When Zionist Flags Flew in a Palestine Pavilion

by David Geffen

## *Editor's note:*

This wonderful story, printed in *The Jerusalem Post Magazine* many months ago, lay dormant in my future article file, waiting for a numismatic item to tie it to the SHEKEL magazine. While to my knowledge, no special medal was minted to commemorate the Palestine Pavilion at the fair, evidently a machine which elongated a coin was placed among the exhibits. Usually, a cent was inserted, along with coin (either 10¢ or 25¢) the machine rolled out the cent, and a design became impressed on the coin. The illustrated coin is 100% unique. There can not be a single doubt. Somebody placed an 1834 U.S. silver 25¢ in the machine, and rolled out the coin into an elongated item. It reads New York World's Fair, 1939, Palestine Pavilion. Somewhere one cent coins with the elongated die impressed must exist.

"ZIONIST FLAG AT World's Fair," the headlines heralded in every major capital city on the globe 51 years ago. The dream of a few individuals became reality with the opening on Sunday, May 28, 1939, of the Palestine Pavilion. Only a year earlier it had seemed impossible that such a structure would rise on Flushing Meadow, in the New York borough of Queens.

In the summer of 1938, the "wunderkind" of the American Zionist Movement, Meyer Weisgal, took over the planning and building of the Palestine Pavilion. With the assistance of Harold Jacobi of the Schenley Corporation, the \$350,000 for the construction of the building was raised through large donations and also the purchase of "bricks for the pavilion" at 25 cents apiece.

During a quick trip to Palestine, Weisgal arranged for most of the exhibits to be constructed there under the direction of the architect and designer Arie El-Hanani, and shipped in pieces for reassembly in the U.S. Albert Einstein, dedicating

the pavilion the following year, described it as "a refuge in a stormy sea of turmoil, which hopefully our beleaguered brothers and sisters can reach."

During the two seasons the Fair was open, several million visitors passed through it. Close to two-and-a-half-million tickets, at a quarter apiece, were sold to people wanting a sight-and-sound journey through the Zionist vision of Palestine.

DR. MARNIN FEINSTEIN, author of *American Zionism 1884-1904*, was an 18-year-old college student when he visited the pavilion on the opening day. As the son of the founder of the Herzliya School in New York, Marnin spoke Hebrew in his Manhattan home even before he knew English; so Palestine, the Jewish people and its language were very much a part of his early years.

"For weeks we had been talking about the Palestine Pavilion," he recalls now. "We have been awaiting this dedication event ever since the

Fair itself had opened four weeks earlier. I was not going to miss it."

The dedication began at noon, with Einstein as the main speaker.

"A recent refugee himself, Einstein was for us perhaps the most famous Jew in the world. His English address with a German accent was incomprehensible to the close to 100,000 people who had assembled. But the emotion was there nevertheless.

"Dr. Stephen Wise gave the other address. His words rolled out like pearls in that stentorian voice of his. He condemned the British White Paper issued only a few weeks before, and the crowd cheered madly. They shouted, 'Give it to the Redcoats!' a reference to the Revolutionary War battles.

Marnin remembers throwing himself into the crowd around Einstein, hoping to shake his hand, but the crush was too great. He could not even get close. But his memories are vivid:

"There were thousands of Jewish flags of all sizes being waved. The words of *Hatikva* being sung that day still resound in my ears. As we moved into the pavilion itself, since until now we had been in the plaza outside, many older people took out bottles of wine, making the *bracha* and a *sheheheyanu* on entering those portals. I visited it several times, but that Day of Dedication had its own special flavour, one to be savored always."

DR. PHILIP GOODMAN, author of eight best-selling anthologies on Jewish holidays and Jewish marriage, relates that early in the summer of 1939, he received a call from one of the professionals at the Jewish Welfare Board in New York asking

him to chair the programme for the Jewish Centre Home Camp Day at the pavilion on August 2.

"At our [summer] camp, practically the entire programme had a Palestine flavour to it. For several years we not only taught songs and dances, but one hour a day all the campers were given classes in Hebrew. The general theme chosen for the pavilion programme was 'Jewish Children Give Thanks to America.' Ten day-camps were each assigned to perform one sequence of this overall project.

"On August 1, just before our day at the Fair, I received a call from a brash young man who introduced himself as Michael Todd. 'I understand,' he said, 'that you are bringing underprivileged kids to the Fair tomorrow. I've arranged for them to see the Wild West Show at 11, the Circus at 12 and then the Bo Jangles performance by Bill Robinson at 5. See you tomorrow.' he concluded, and hung up.

"Bill Robinson as Bo Jangles was one of the highlights of the Fair and after the show he posed with some of our 2,000 kids."

The pageant went off without a hitch in the adjacent Temple of Religion auditorium. Then the kids got to see the Palestine Pavilion itself.

"I recall the impressive exhibition of Palestine Jewish art and the joyousness of accomplishment which circulated throughout the building. There was a great feeling of pride in what the Yishuv had achieved. Now for the first time it was being documented in this world showcase, where millions of people could witness how our fellow Jews had turned a desert into a flowering land."

AT HER HOME in Jerusalem, Dr. Bert Goldstein described the part played by her late husband, Dr. Israel Goldstein, as chairman of the Pavilion Committee, in the opening ceremony. When they reached the pavilion that Sunday morning, thousands of people were already waiting.

"It was the largest turnout for any event held at the Fair. Even the *New York Times* placed the number of attendees at over 100,000. When my husband came out to check if there were sufficient chairs for Einstein, Thomas Mann, Mayor La Guardia and others, he found all them occupied. He tried to persuade the 'occupiers' to get up. At first to no avail; but finally they listened to him. La Guardia, who was watching the proceedings from the wings, whispered to Dr. Goldstein when he came out, 'How do you Zionist expect to manage a state of your own if you cannot even manage a platform?'

"Finally the festivities got under-way with the addresses of Einstein, Wise, Weizmann by radio from London, La Guardia and others. When my husband spoke, he reflect-

ed on a stone brought from the ruins of a synagogue at Kibbutz Hanita and placed at the entrance to the pavilion. 'This stone,' he emphasized as he stood looking out at the crowd 'has been for centuries a witness of Israel's renaissance.'"

The stone from the pavilion was given to the Goldsteins when the exhibits were dismantled and was on display in his office until they made aliya. Then it was presented to the Jewish Agency office in New York.

"I visited the pavilion many times and I helped to organize the joint Women's Day at the Fair," says Dr. Goldstein. "I recall that when the millionth visitor came to the pavilion — a Chinese gentlemen, I believe — a grand celebration was held. Over two-and-a-quarter million people saw it.

"The pavilion served its purpose. It aroused the consciousness of our own Jewish people about what the land of Palestine might become. When the war was over, the memories of that pavilion helped to energize American Jewry and provided them with a stimulus to work to bring the State of Israel into being."



# Bela Kun

*by Peter S. Horvitz*

From March 21, 1919 until August 1, 1919, for 133 days, a communist government, led by a Transylvanian Jew, ruled Hungary. This government had come to power through a series of revolutions following the collapse of the Hapsburg monarchy at the conclusion of the First World War.

Backed by Lenin, Bela Kun had come to Hungary from Russia at the end of November, 1918, to head the Hungarian Communist Party. With Russian support, Kun launched a propaganda offensive against the government of Count Michael Karolyi (1875-1955). Assisted by the government's embarrassment over the Romanian and Czech occupation of parts of traditional Hungarian territory, Kun soon became a real threat. Following a bloody riot by his followers, Kun was arrested and jailed on February 22, 1919. But even from jail, Kun continued his attacks on the government. One month later, Kun was released from jail and invited to form a government of his own.

Bela Kun had been born in 1885 in Szilagycseh, Transylvania (now Czehul Silvaniei, Romania). His family were middle-class Jews, his father a notary. Kun had been a journalist and a member of an insurance board in native Transylvania before the outbreak of the First World War. With the war, Kun was drafted into the Austro-Hungarian army, to serve as a Cadet-Sergeant on the Russian Front. Kun was captured and he spent almost four years as a prison-

er of war in Siberia. He spent his time there wisely and he left Russia as a fluent speaker of Russian and as a trusted confidant of Lenin.

With the successful overthrow of Count Karolyi, Kun formed a government that was quite remarkable. Almost all the members of Kun's government were Jewish. This has often been cited as a major contributing factor to the atmosphere of anti-Semitism that pervaded Hungary following the fall of Kun until the conclusion of the Second World War. But if Kun and almost all of his ministers were Jews, so were many of the victims of his regime.

The government that Kun formed was noted for the viciousness of its methods and the absoluteness of its control. Certainly hundreds were killed in the "red terror" that Kun released.

Furthermore, the economic policies of Kun's government created absolute chaos in the marketplace.

Between the economic chaos, a Romanian invasion, general discontent, and threats by the Allies, Kun was forced to resign. By agreement, he was carried by train through Austria to exile in the Soviet Union. There he remained as a trusted confidant of Lenin. However, his relationship with Stalin was not so good and in 1937, after a show trial, where his prosecutor was his own former Treasury Commissar, Bela Kun was executed.

The time of the Magyar Tanac Skoztarsasag or "Hungarian State Republic" that Bela Kun formed is

not one of unrelieved blackness. It did, for instance, mark the official conversion to communism of George Lukacs (1885-1971), who became Kun's People's Commissar of Education. Like most of Kun's associates, Lukacs was Jewish. Today, Lukacs is recognized as one of the outstanding philosophers and critics that the communist world produced. He has been called "the finest Marxist since Marx." Lukacs's influence was felt beyond the communist world and has left his impression not only on the philosophy and literary criticism of the West, but also on its sociology. His influence on the French existentialists has been particularly noted.

Much of the economic chaos of Bela Kun's reign was created by his insistence on abandoning the old monetary system based on coinage. Kun distrusted credit, and this too was abolished. Each worker was paid for his work in paper currency, printed only on one side, equivalent in value to his work. These Soviet notes, issued under the direction of the Treasury Commissar Eugen Varga, soon, through the actions of inflation, became almost worthless. Eventually, no one would accept these notes.

At this juncture, Kun seemed to have had a change of heart about coinage and he ordered the preparation of a pattern coin of 10 Korona. Four specimens of this coin were struck before the collapse of Kun's government, one in silver and three in bronze.

These coins were described by Howard D. Gibbs in an article entitled "The Coinage of Bela-Kuhn" in the February, 1934 issue of *The Numismatist*. According to Gibbs, at

the time of the article, the silver specimen and one of the bronze specimens were in "a prominent collection at Baltimore." The other bronze specimens were in the collections of Virgil Brand and Gibbs himself.

The Gibbs specimen, which he illustrated, seems to measure 34 millimeters (the size of the photograph, the text does not state the size.) It is struck in thick bronze. The obverse shows a naked woman, the goddess of Harves, sowing grain. Before her appears the monogram of the coin's designer, Fulop O. Beck (born 1873). Beck was one of the outstanding medalists that Hungary produced and he, also, was a Jew. Around the design is the inscription MAGYAR ORZAG — TANAC SKOZTARSASAG or "Hungarian Soviet State Republic." The reverse shows fasces dividing the values 10 KOR. Around this is the same inscription as on the obverse. The coin is undated.

According to Gibbs the "engraver" of this coin, by which I assume he means Beck, following the fall of Bela Kun, barely escaped from Hungary with his help, taking with him the four examples. The dies had been already destroyed. By



1930 Beck had returned to Hungary, as Daniel M. Freidenberg's *Jewish Minters and Medalists* pictures two medals he produced that year in Hungary.

During the time of Bela Kun's government, there also appeared a series of three tokens. These "partisan tokens" were struck on thin iron planchets and their obverse designs appear as backward incuses on the reverse. The 20 Filler token measures 22 millimeters and is circular. Its design consists of a large 20 with a small F. for Filler below. To the left and right of the number appear the letters F. P. All three of these tokens bear on the obverse a counter stamp showing the upper part of a bare-chested, muscular man holding a hammer behind his head, ready to



strike down. The 1 Koróna token measures 25 millimeters and is also circular. It has a large 1 above a small K. for the denomination and also the F. and P. to the left and right. The design of the 2 Koróna is the same except that the center number is 2. This token has a maximum measurement of 31 millimeters and is hexagonal in shape. I don't know what the F. P. of the inscriptions stands for. I suggest that it might stand for something like "Federation of Partisans" or for the Hungarian "Felhatalmazt Penz-nem" or "Authorized Currency." All these tokens are very rare. A complete set of them are sold in their Auction No. 11 by Giessener Munzhandlung Dieter Gorny in Giessen, West Germany of March 21, 1978, the 59th anniversary of the establishment of Kun's government.

In 1969, to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment by Bela Kun of the Magyar Tanacs Skoztarsasag or "Hungarian State Republic," the Magyar Nepkoztarsasag or "Hungarian People's Republic" issued a set of two commemorative silver coins. The design of the two coins is the same.



The obverse shows the upper part of the body of yelling revolutionary, flailing his arms. In his left hand he waves a flag and on his head he wears a cap and his head is turned to the left. Around him is the name of Kun's republic in Hungarian. Below is 1919.III.21 or March 21, 1919, the date of the establishment of Kun's government. The reverse has the "Hungarian People's Republic" in Hungarian and the date 1969 around a small Hungarian shield, flanked by two decorative devices, above the denomination, either 50 Forint or 100 Forint. The two parts of the denomination are separated by BP., the mintmark of the Budapest mint. The 50 Forint coin measures 32 millimeters and the 100 measures 36 millimeters. Both coins had an issue of 32,000 business strikes and 8,000 proof specimens.

Although Bela Kun's government lasted only 133 days, it marked something unique in modern history. Though other Jewish heads of state have appeared, Bela Kun stands alone as a Jewish dictator. Perhaps Kun had more in common in his style of governance with his fellow Transylvanian Vlad Dracula than with David or Solomon. Nevertheless, one must not forget that Jewish leaders have included both David and Ahab, Solomon and Herod. A far greater crime than any that Kun committed was the use of the failure of his policies to create a blanket indictment of the Jewish people.



# Comments on the Second Temple

*by Ralph L. Fusco*

For some time I have had a desire to know what the 2nd Temple looked like. My most recent acquisition, a silver tetradrachm struck during Bar Kokhba Revolt not only shows the facade of a temple but carries with it a remarkable history.

One of the most violent periods in ancient history that shook the whole Roman world was the period of the Bar Kokhba Revolt. The origin of the Revolt is usually attributed to one or more of the following causes: 1. Hadrian, The Ruler of Judea at the time had promised the Jews at the beginning of his reign in 117 C.E. that the temple would be rebuilt. He withdrew his promise at the behest of the Samaritans who were adamantly opposed to the rebuilding of the temple; 2. He prohibited circumcision, a practice vital to Judaism; and 3. He issued a decree to build a temple to Jupiter on the site of the 2nd temple. In addition, there may have been other factors contributing to the Revolt as the Jews had a yearning for national freedom and a desire for spiritual redemption.

At the head of the Revolt was Shimon Bar Kosiba, later renamed Bar Kokhba — the son of a star. The Revolt, from 132 — 135 C.E., commonly referred to as the 2nd Revolt, [although some historians refer to it as the 4th Revolt], was the last time a Jewish government ruled Judea until the modern state of Israel in 1948.

The coins of the 2nd Revolt, unlike the coins of the 1st Revolt,

(66 C.E.) were struck over pre-existing Roman coins. On most of them the undertype is clearly visible beneath the new design. The Tetradrachms exist with the dates, year one (133 C.E.) and year two (134 C.E.) of freedom, and undated. The obverse shows the four-column facade of a temple and a symbolic representation of the Ark of the Covenant between the middle two columns. On the coin was the inscription Jerusalem and a star above the temple.

The reverse of the coin depicts the Lulav and Etrog used at Sukkot, one of the three pilgrimage festivals, when every Jew had to journey to Jerusalem to appear before God in the temple.

With the suppression of the Bar Kokhba Revolt the minting of Jewish coins in Eretz Israel ceased for almost 2,000 years. In 1968, the Bank of Israel issued a 20th Anniversary of the State of Israel and the City of Jerusalem Reunified coin showing a replica of the Bar Kokhba Tetradrachma. The same facade is also shown on the reverse of a Historical City Coin commemorating the city of Jerusalem issued by the Government of Israel in 1966.

Does my coin actually depict the 2nd temple? Some simple math might help. The 2nd temple was destroyed in 70 C.E. The Bar Kokhba coin was first minted in 133 C.E., 63 years later. If the designer of the coin was in his late 60's, he may well have seen the 2nd temple prior to its destruction. At the present time there is no older

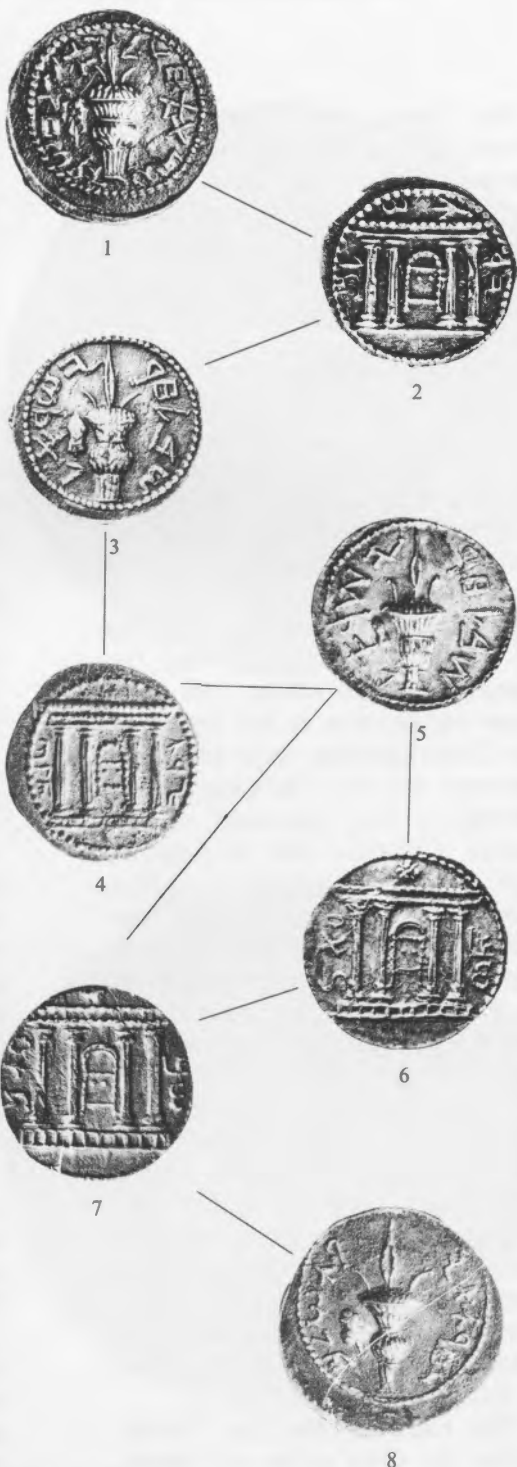
known representation of Jerusalem or the 2nd temple than the Bar Kokhba Tetradrachm. Until the archaeologist's spade unearths any other representations of the 2nd temple this one will have to suffice.

## TETRADRACHMS

-ARIE KINDLER

(A) The sequence from Year One to Year Two (133 C.E.): The die with the name "Jerusalem" divided into three groups of two letters in three-quarter circle around the Temple façade was used in the first and second years: ירושלים (2)\* Here the use of the round  $\omega$  is characteristic. The rarity of this die's appearance in the second year in conjunction with the second year's die (3), indicates that it was probably used then only during the early part of that year (133 C.E.). During the first half of the second year, the name "Jerusalem" as minting authority was still retained, but a new die was used (4), on which the name was divided into two groups of letters, as was later the name "Shim'on". In the second half of the second year, the tetradrachms bear the name "Shim'on" instead of "Jerusalem," the final two letters of the name appearing in the form:  $\zeta\eta$  (6); the *shin* form is angular  $\omega$  on the reverse (5). This type was undoubtedly issued in the second half of the second year.

(B) The sequence from the second year to the third year (134 C.E.): As early as the beginning of the third year, the last two letters of the name "Shim'on" appear as  $\gamma\lambda$  (7). Coin No. 8 is an example of the second year reverse die's continued appearance at the start of the third year.



# Script of the Flossenburg Concentration Camp

One of the least publicized of the Nazi concentration camps is the camp located near the outskirts of the German border town of Floss. The Flossenburg concentration camp had its beginning in May 1938 when construction of the camp was completed by a group of German prisoners.

For the next two years the camp was a repository for common criminals. In the Spring of 1940 political prisoners from the German occupied territories began to arrive. In 1941, a large contingent of Soviet prisoners of war were shipped to the camp. As was the case with most of the camps in the Nazi system, Jews were one of the primary groups to be imprisoned at Flossenburg.

Conditions at the camp were typically harsh. Initially, prisoners were put to work cutting and hauling stone in a nearby granite quarry. Later, their efforts were redirected to assembling parts for fighter planes at a local Messerschmidt factory and to working as laborers in other armament, construction, optical and mining industries.

Flossenburg was somewhat atypical in that it held both men and women. Of the 65,000 prisoners

*by Lance K. Campbell*

unfortunate enough to be interned there, 14,000 were women. Gender, however, played no favorites. Female prisoners met the same fate as their male counterparts. Among the notables who lived and died at Flossenburg were Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a church leader and critic of Adolf Hitler, and Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, a conspirator in a death plot against Hitler.

The numismatic remnants of this unhappy place consist of a unique type of money known as Pramien-schein which roughly translates as premium notes. Premium notes were authorized for use in a number of concentration camps by the Nazi government. According to a May 1943 document entitled "Service Regulations for the Granting of Favors to Inmates" the notes were to be issued to prisoners for any of four reasons: industriousness, good behavior, carefulness, or special work achievement.

Only two denominations of premium notes, .50 and 1 Reichsmark, were issued for use at Flossenburg. There are, however, several types of each denomination. All notes measure approximately 70x50mm. Minor size variations can be attributed to the fact that little care was taken to insure uniformity



1 mark (blue)



1 mark (tan)

of size during the note cutting process. All were printed in black on cardboard stock.

Two types of the .5 Reichsmark are known. The first was printed on green cardboard and the second on gray. Both types have "Konzentrationslager Flossenbürg" on one line above the word "PRAMIENSCHEIN." Both are scarce.

The 1 Reichsmark notes come in two different colors of cardboard: a yellowish tan and blue. The yellowish tan type is similar in design to the .5 Reichsmark described above. The blue colored pieces are of a somewhat different design. "PRAMIENSCHEIN" followed by the denomination is on a line above the text "Konzentrationslager Flossenbürg." The center of the note is then over stamped with the Waffen S.S. camp logo.

There is a subtype of the blue 1 Reichsmark. On some notes the "A" in "PRAMIENSCHEIN" is 2mm wide. On others it is 2.5mm wide.

A subcamp of Flossenbürg located at Holysov, Czechoslovakia, sent prisoners to work at the Metallwerke Holleischen GmbH munitions plant. A curious set of scrip, apparently remainders, surfaced during the last decade.

All denominations, and there are

a whopping 17 of them, measure 54x30mm and resemble movie theater admission tickets. All were printed in black on different colors of cardboard. Denominations include 1 Reichspfennig (RP), gray; 2 RP, blue; 3 RP, green; 4 RP, tan; 5 RP, orange; 6 RP, gray; 7 RP, tan; 8 RP, green; 9 RP, pink; 10 RP, yellow; 15 RP, pink; 20 RP, gray; 40 RP, green; 50 RP, salmon; 1 Reichsmark (RM), tan; 2 RM, blue; and 5 RM, tan. All have a "MWH" logo towards the upper left corner. There is a repeating "MWH" logo in the underprint.

These ticket-like notes are usually found in a set, with the possible exception of the 5 RM. The 5 RM is the rarest of the series and is usually priced in the vicinity of eight times that of any of the other denominations.

In April, 1945, the US Army was approaching Flossenbürg. The S.S. camp administration received orders to move the bulk of the prisoners. Fifteen thousand prisoners were ordered on a death march. Those who could not keep up were shot on the spot. Few survived this trek. When the US 90th Infantry Division liberated the camp they found only 2,000 sick and feeble prisoners left alive.



.5 mark (gray)



Holysov chit for 40 RPf. (green)

# Cyprus Redux

A Belated Remembrance

by Avi Shamir

IScene

**H**istorical footnotes are often lost in the shuffle of progress. Antiquated developments in the chronicles of Zionism tend to diminish in relevance; other advancements are obscured by short memories.

A Mediterranean island northwest of Haifa once bore testimony to a critical chapter in the establishment of the State of Israel. But two generations after the War of Independence, the saga of Cyprus remains to be told.

By the end of the 1948 war, roughly ten percent of the nascent state's population had passed through the Cypriot camps. The detention of over 60,000 Jews en route to Palestine best exemplified the enforcement of Britain's White Paper policy, drawn to appease the Arabs at the expense of Jewish immigration. In the minds of many who didn't live through it, Cyprus was a stumbling block that deprived the Yishuv (the pre-state Jewish settlement) of a vital source of manpower. To those who saw the gateway to Palestine through barbed wire, Cyprus was a building block that buttressed the Zionist infrastructure.

Illegal immigration to Palestine after the Second World War, known as Aliyah Bet, often resulted in the seizure of boatloads of refugees by the British Navy off the shores of Haifa. In late December 1947, no less than 15,000 aspiring immigrants crammed aboard two ships, the *Pan York* and the *Pan Crescent*, in the Bulgarian port of Burgas, and set off for Palestine. Their numbers represented the largest wave of immigration ever, though they succeeded in seeing the outline of the Carmel Mountains on the horizon only a year later. In the interim, they joined the already teeming prison society of Cyprus.

Although the Cyprus encampment, surrounded by double barbed-wire fences, towers and searchlights, assumed the appearance of a concentration camp, the comparison ended once inside. Freedom of movement was noticeable from within, as British guards confined their watches to the periphery.

Inside the gates, a lone radio broadcast news from Palestine. A single-sheet weekly, *Shurot*, run off a stencil, supplied camp news. Esther Politatzkaya, a member of the cultural committee, announced daily developments in Yiddish through a pipe in a wall that served as a loudspeaker. Hebrew lessons were conducted in the tents and wooden huts. Soccer balls were kicked around, occasionally past British goalies. There were Jewish police and Jewish laborers, and creative minds to devise makeshift shows.

In the camp's Cyprus Theater, 500 people sat nightly in the open-air structure of corrugated metal, wooden planks, bamboo and strips of tent to celebrate Yiddish culture. Moshe Shamir, the musical director, recalls his most memorable contribution: a Yiddish song he sang with the choir that became the "Hymn of Cyprus," sung with the same reverence attached to the "Hatikva."

"From brothers and sisters,  
From young and old;  
Who sing your song,  
The song of heroism and victory."

Dov Noy – then a delegate from Palestine, now a Hebrew University professor – translated it into Hebrew.

The Cyprus Theater thrived. Ruth Maimon, whose singing career in Israel spanned 30 years, first sang in Cyprus. Miriam Zohar, currently acting with the Habima theater company, first performed with the theater. The plays of Shalom Aleichem and Gogol were staged; there were poetry recitations and dance performances.

The drama of Cyprus is best documented by personal accounts. Aryeh Zizemski, Gad Hilb and Moshe Shamir most clearly define this singular interlude in time. Zizemski was one of a handful of people to have escaped from Auschwitz, to have been recaptured, and to have survived. When, as part of Aliyah Bet, he landed in Cyprus in May 1947, his stature among his peers, as well as his knowledge of English, elevated him to the position of

chief administrator in the Central Secretariat, which was comprised solely of Jews under detention.

Cyprus was divided into four camps in the port city of Famagusta – a conglomerate of Zionist movements in transit. Each camp was represented by delegates from nine different political branches, ranging from the breadth of the ideological spectrum, which operated under the umbrella of the central committee. Although under internment, this political consortium was afforded the opportunity to exercise a semblance of self-government. Though some of the names would eventually change, the list of parties in Cyprus would reappear in future Israeli governments: Mapai, Hashomer Hatzair, Histadrut Pechah (formerly wartime partisans), Ahdut Avoda, Betar, Mizrahi, Agudat Yisrael, Zionim Klali'im and Haoved Hazioni. As Zizemski asserts: "From wall to wall, we formed an efficient and cohesive coalition government-in-exile."

"You have to understand where we were coming from," Zizemski continues. "In spite of our diverse political outlooks, we understood that we would have to work together to achieve the common goal of reaching our homeland."

This unity stands in contrast to the disharmony so prevalent among Israeli governments, past and present. But further underscoring the tenor of relations is an incident involving newly arrived prisoners. When a boatload of North African Jews arrived in Cyprus, they were disturbed by the sight of a red flag raised by the then communist-affiliated Hashomer Hatzair. A meeting was held, in which the common plight of the refugees was discussed, and the issue was swiftly resolved to the satisfaction of all parties concerned.

The Zionist dynamic was also assisted by the involvement of well-entrenched international organizations. The Jewish Agency and Joint Distribution Committee used their influence with the British authorities to ensure that essential services were brought up to standard. Owing largely to their efforts, sufficient food, clothing and health services were provided. Pressure from the Jewish Agency also enabled doctors, nurses and teachers from Palestine to enter the camps.

Others entered through clandestine means. Since most of the camp's population consisted of healthy young men and

women, the Hagana (the pre-state army) sought to tap the human reservoir for the upcoming war effort. Under the eyes of guards circling the barbed wire, the Hagana infiltrators conducted (unarmed) military training exercises, which often provoked British authorities to intervene. Less obvious was an escape tunnel. According to Zizemski, several hundred "recruits" emerged from the tunnel to the Famagusta port. There they swam out to the harbor where waiting boats carried them to Palestine.

Prisoner demonstrations against the British also periodically erupted. Zizemski took advantage of British sensitivities to humane concerns and helped win the occasional release of prisoners. Several thousand prisoners in total were set free – pregnant women, children, the sick and the aged.

In September 1948, Zizemski applied for a writ of *habeas corpus* in the Famagusta District Court to test the legality of his imprisonment and those of the Jewish refugees still interned. Though his action attracted attention in the international press, his attempt was thwarted by hastily drawn new laws.

Zizemski, who closed the gate at the final liberation proceedings in 1949, recalls: "We lived in a heroic time, a time that only comes up once in generations. We never despaired. We fought for a worthy goal, and we achieved it."

Though many of Aliya Bet's operations were frustrated on the high seas, the dedication of professional seamen helped perpetuate the exodus. Gad Hilb was raised in Palestine, a former merchant marine, recruited Palyamnik (Palmach seaman) and captain of the *Pan York*. In the final phases of Aliya Bet, when the probability of Jewish statehood was near at hand, the *Pan York* and *Pan Crescent* arrived in the port of Famagusta, on New Year's Eve 1948, under a British escort. With the acquiescence of his crew, and the captain and crew of the adjoining ship, Hilb stunned his British captors by demanding the safety of his crew, ensured in writing. He also wanted to retain control of his ship. Hilb stated his intentions: "Failure to meet my demands means that I can't be held responsible for the safe disembarkation of my passengers."

These words struck a raw nerve with the British Naval Command in Famagus-

ta. After the *Exodus* affair, His Majesty's government could not sustain the embarrassment of another debacle, this one involving 15,000 refugees.

Hilb's demands were met. The *Pan York* and *Pan Crescent* were escorted to an anchorage point on the Cypriot coast, where a British frigate's surveillance kept them from carrying out further operations. Months later, Hilb's earlier audacity would pay dividends. Because he had refused to surrender, two ships were available for action when conditions were ripe. After the British withdrawal from Palestine was completed, the *Pan York* and *Pan Crescent* launched a "shuttle service" running from Famagusta to Haifa, which lasted until the camps were evacuated. These activities must be seen in the context of British policies vis à vis

the Arab world, and a United Nations prohibition of immigration into the war zone. Still the ships continued and the prison population dwindled.

Shamir, a singer of Romanian origin, who was aboard the *Pan York* on an earlier Palestine-bound voyage, when 7,500 refugees crammed onto a boat suited for 2,000, notes: "There was an atmosphere of good will, of cooperation, of euphoria. All orders were carried out in an amicable way." A Mapai delegate, he was also among those who closed the camps a year later.

On the road to Tel Aviv, one still can catch a glimpse of a beached boat mounted on the wayside. Yet despite the waning memories, Cyprus remains a powerful episode in Zionist history. ■

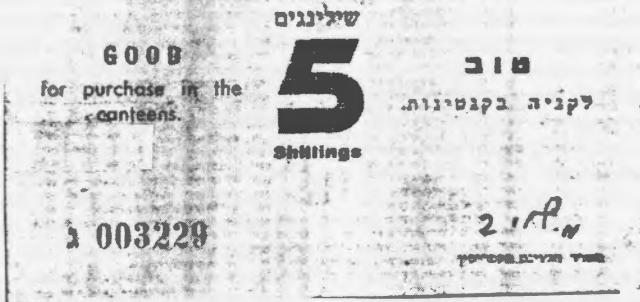
# THE AMERICAN-JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE (AJDC)

A number of camps were established in Cyprus to stem the human tide of Jews wishing to enter Palestine. The British allowed the use of these notes for internal purchases within the camps. Three types of notes were produced.

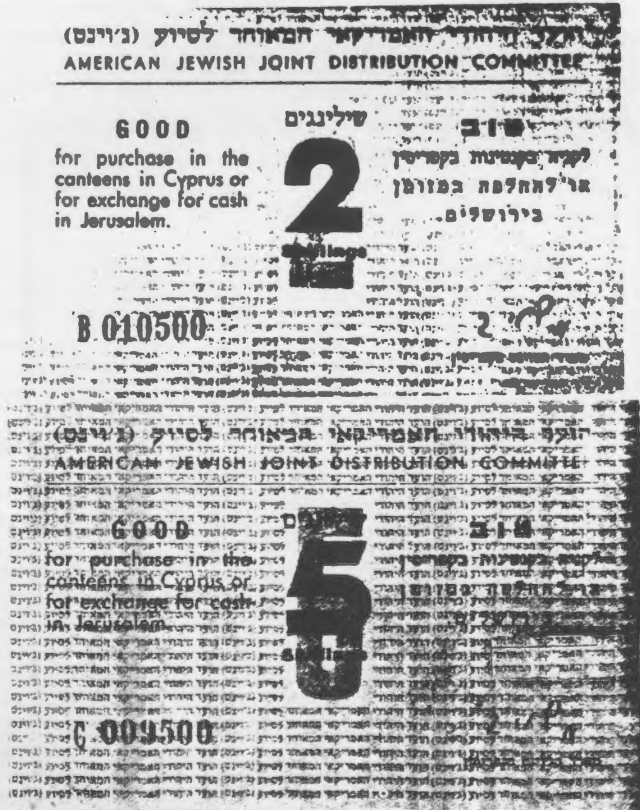


From the original Sidney L. Olson collection.

הוֹדֵר הָאֻמֶּרִיקָאִי הַבִּאוּחֵר לִסְיוֹעַ (גִּיּוֹנָט) קִפְרִינָה  
AMERICAN JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE, CYPRUS



Type 1. Text reads, "THE UNITED AMERICAN COMMITTEE ASSISTANCE (JOINT) / GOOD FOR PURCHASE IN THE CANTEENS IN CYPRUS OR FOR EXCHANGE FOR CASH IN JERUSALEM/ (denomination) / THE JOINT OFFICE IN CYPRUS." Text is in both English and Hebrew. Notes are serial numbered from 1 to 12000.



Type 2. The British objected to the reference about exchanging the notes for cash in Jerusalem and the text was changed to read, "THE UNITED AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR ASSISTANCE (JOINT) CYPRUS." Serial numbered from 1 to 6000 with control letter A for the 1 shilling, B for the 2 shilling, and C for the 5 shilling.

# The Numismatics of Akko

by Edward Janis

Except for Jerusalem, no city in Israel has a lengthy varied history as Akko. Even its name has been changed in over 3400 years of its recorded history which has recorded seventeen sieges of the city. Some of the best known failures to capture this sheltered harbor on the Mediterranean were the Hebrews in the time of Joshua: "Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho" — Judges 1:31; Simon Macabee in the second century B.C.E., and Napoleon in 1799. Not all the changing tides of civilization left their numismatic marks on this treasure of sites in the Western Galilee. I remember donning my shoes and entering the splendid Mosque of El Jezzar back in 1969 on AINA's first study tour. I was alone. The interior was sun drenched and the quiet overpowering. I was transposed a dozen centuries in time, except for one thing. There in the corner was the most stately grandfather clock that I ever saw and its large pendulum was slowly marking the time to the future.

332-305 B.C.E. — The Ake mint was first opened by Alexander III (the Great) sometime in 332 B.C.E. probably in connection with the siege of Tyre. The gold stater features a head of Athena with formal curls, necklace, and wears a Corinthian helmet.



The silver tetradracm, drachm and hemichalkon show on the obverse a beardless head of young Herakles wearing a lions head skin. On the reverse Zeus is sitting on throne with his feet resting on a stool. He is draped to the waist and holds an eagle in his extended right hand and a scepter in his left hand. His name in Greek descends facing center on left.



Of all Alexander's mints, only Sidon and Ake coins were dated. FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Dated Coinage of Ake & Sidon" D.T. Newell; "Tetradrachms & Staters of Alexander III", E. Janis THE SHEKEL Vol 5. No. 2 Summer 1972. Good chart how to read the Phoenician dates.

c. 251-210 B.C.E. — The name of Ake was changed to Ptolemais honoring Ptolemy Philadelphus. Under Ptolemy II we find coins with the mintmark of Ptolemais and having the title Sothroes (Savior) instead of the usual Basililaos (king). It is the author's opinion that this was done so as not to offend the Jewish population of the province who recognized the Almighty as the only king. It is also believed that these Ptolomaic issues were struck in a central mint believed to have been in Alexandria. There exist some silver tetradrachms struck

under Ptolemy II which have the mintmarks of both Joppa and Gaza on the same coin (BCM 35/142) which strengthens this theory. Most of the silver issues feature the portrait of Ptolemy I even though the coins were issued much later under Ptolemy II, Ptolemy III, and Ptolemy IV. Large bronzes have the bearded head of Zeus on the obverse and the stern Egyptian eagle on the reverse together with the Ake-Ptolomais mintmark. It is interesting to note that Bar Kochba overstruck these large pieces with the Jerusalem and Schnat Achat (year one) reverses.

Medium bronzes of greater rarity were struck with portraits of Cleopatra and Alexander II.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** "Ta Nomismata tou Kratous ton Ptolemaion" J.N. Svoronos; "Ptolemies, Kings of Egypt" R.S. Poole, British Museum Catalogue.

*c. 180-107 B.C.E.* — The Selucids seized control of Ptolemais from the Ptolemies in 200 B.C.E. following the Battle of Panion. No coins were struck until late in Seleucus IV reign when limited issues of bronze and silver were issued. The mint was in continual operation, except under the reign of Antiochus VII, until 107 B.C.E. Ake-Ptolemais was the center of the administrative forces of the Selucids in Phoenicia, Coele-Syria and Palestine. The city was besieged and conquered by Alexander Jannaeus in 104 B.C.E. The silver issues of the Selucids at Ake are beautiful in detail. The obverse show a diademed head of the king facing right except Cleopatra Thea whose bust is jugate with Antiochus VIII on some issues. The earlier reverses show a nude Apollo seated left, followed by an



Antiochus V  
Rx. Zeus on  
throne.



Demetrius I  
Rx. Tyche  
seated on  
Throne



Antiochus VI  
Rx. Eagle on  
Thunderbolt



Jugate Busts  
Cleopatra Thea  
Antiochus VIII  
Rx, Zeus

eagle standing left on a thunderbolt and later Zeus standing and finally Athena standing. The bronze pieces start with the portrait of Antiochus IV, switch to the jugate heads of

the Dioscuri Bust of Zeus, then Tyche, and lastly Tyche and Zeus jugate. The reverses have Lyre, Zeus, Tyche, Cornucopiae, coupled with varied monograms and dates. It is interesting to note that the legends on most of these bronze pieces refer to the process of changing the names of the local cities to become other Antiochs. The legends translated mean "Antiochaens in Ptolemais".

**FOR FURTHER STUDY —**  
 "Akko Ptolemais" L. Kadman, *Corpus Nummorum Palaestinensium* Vol. IV; "Seleucid Coins of Ake-Ptolemais" A.B. Brett *ANSMN* I; "Late Seleucid Mints in Ake-Ptolemais & Damascus" Edward T. Newell *ANSNM* No. 84; "Seleucid Kings of Syria", P. Gardner, *BMC*; "Coins of the Seleucid Empire From the Collection of Arthur Houghton", A. Houghton, *Ancient Coins in North American Collections* Vol. 4, published *ANS*.

**44 B.C.E.-53 C.E.** In 64 B.C.E., the Romans under Pompey invaded Syria. Jerusalem fell in October 63. Under Roman reorganization, Pompey maintained the liberties of Ptolemais, and although under Rome, the city enjoyed autonomy. Coinage started in year LE-5 of the Caesarean era which was 44 BCE. In 38 BCE during their nuptial visit, a coin of Mark Anthony was struck. The reverse featured his bride Cleopatra. Some coins of previous contemporary issues were counter-marked with an Egyptian eagle in honor of Cleopatra. The pre-colonial issues are relatively rare except for a few struck at the time of Claudius 52/53 CE. **FOR FURTHER STUDY:** "Akko Ptolemais" L. Kadman; "Roman Coins" Mattingly for a broad coverage

**54-268 C.E. —** Under Nero, during the thirteenth year of his reign, in 67, a "founder coin" was issued and Ptolemais became a Roman colony with the full name of "Colonia Claudia Caesaris Ptolemais Germanica Felix Stabilis." Its coins now had Latin inscriptions as befitting a Roman colony. Its inhabitants had equal status with the citizens of Rome. These founder coins of Nero showed a laureate head of Nero facing right (except for one issue). The reverse shows the founder plowing the perimeter of the new city (allegorical not actual) with an ox and a cow. Above the team, there are four standards inscribed: III, V, X, XII. These refer to the V Macedonica, the X Frentensis, certain units of the III Cyrenaica and the XII Fulminata. Other founder or rededication types appear under the Ptolemais city coinages of Trajan, Hadrian, Geta, Elagabalus and Philip Senior.



Severus Septimus  
 Rx. winged Thunderbolt



Caracalla  
 Rx. Perseus holding head  
 of Medusa & Harpa in L. hand

From Nero to Gallienus this colony endured for 214 years under 23 Emperors, 4 Empresses and include a joint reign (Aurelius &

Verus). In the early period from Nero to Commodus, the coinage is scanty with only 28 types in the 140 years. The reverses had only 6 different varieties as a type. The Flavian Emperors, Vespasian, Titus and Domitian, had no coins of this city. In the later coinage, we have 148 types in 75 years.

With the colony status, the Latin legends surrounding the Emperor's portrait are abbreviated viz: IMP. NER. CLA. CAES. AUG. GER. P.M. TR.PT — IMPERATOR NERO CLAUDIUS AUGUSTUS GERMANICUS PATER MAXIMUS TRIBUNE.

On the reverses in addition to the "founder type" previously discussed, the more important types are temples, shrines, and Tyche showing her seated, standing or being crowned by Nike.



Philip Senior  
Rx. Zeus Heliopolites  
standing in portable  
Shrine



Severus Alexander  
Rx Reclining River God



Valerian  
Rx Sacred Tree

c. 215 — After the death of Severus in 211, Caracalla noted that three Eastern mints were striking inferior low grade silver tetradrachms. In his trip to Antioch and Egypt Caracalla, because of the great profit to be made because of cost difference of the full value of high silver content tetradrachms and the smaller cost of these inferior low content silver tetradrachms caused dozens of mints to issue these pieces. The profits were used to pay for military supplies and men. Each of the tetradrachms had a portrait of the Emperor on the obverse and an eagle on the reverse. Between the legs of the eagle was a mintmark. In the case of Akko-Ptolemais it is a small figure of Zeus-Heliopolites, the chief deity of the city at this period. He is represented as a bearded man, standing, holding a whip in one hand and ears of corn in the other. His power over nature, fertility and growth, made him responsible for mankind's fate. FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY: "The Syrian Tetradrachms of Caracalla and Macrinus" A.R. Bellinger.

722/732 (uncertain date) — There exists one type of post reform umaiyad coinage struck in Akka. This mint was first published by Castiglioni and later appeared in Rev. Nu. Belge in 1864. Walker lists this as #904. On the reverse, the outer circular inscription reads: "In the name of God this fals was struck in Akkia." FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY: "A Catalogue of the Arab-Byzantine & Post-Reform Umaiyyad Coins" J. Walker.

c. 1140-1260 — Most specialists agree that the majority of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem coinage was struck in Acre. The deniers and

obels of Baldwin III (1143-63), Amaury (1163-1174), Guy of Lusignan (1186-1192) and others to c. 1250 are in this period. The cross pattee was on the obverse and the Tower of David, Holy Sepulchre of Fleur de Lis on the reverse. Arab Bezants were imitated with gold content varying from 66-80%. According to Metcalf, these imitations were struck for 125 years. In 1250, the Bishop of Chateauroux arrived and quickly reported these monetary practices to Pope Innocent IV who condemned the Christians in Acre striking with the name of Mohammed and the date of the era of his birth. The practice was forbidden by the threat of excommunication. These Crusaders were very practical. A new type of bezant followed proclaiming Christian legends, in Arabic, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" and "struck in Acre in the year one thousand two hundred one and fifty." FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Coinage of the Crusades and the Latin East" D.M. Metcalf.

Other governmental issues include the following: Acco, Ace, Ake, Acre now called Akko is one of the municipalities of Israel that has struck an official medal for presentation by the "City Fathers" for a job well done, a contest winner, or other meritorious action. As most others, it is uniface. The more important the presentation, the larger the plaque that the medal is mounted upon. All of these medals feature the city's coat-of-arms. FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Judaic Tokens & Medals", S. Haffner, published AINA.

Israel Government Coins and Medals Corporation, in 1965, issued



a state medal of Acre as part of the nine coin-medals series. The obverse depicts a stylized city view showing the sea wall fortress, minaret, palm tree, a sailing ship in the background and a fish on top of the waves in the foreground. The reverse has a copy of the reverse of a coin of Elagabalus (c. 221-222) showing a harbor quay, six columned building, Tyche being crowned by Nike, Perseus holding the head of Medusa and Athena holding a shield and a spear. (All this on a unique coin that is in a private collection in Israel.)

Another Akko reference coin set was struck by IGCAM. The reverse shows the below grade massive halls of the crypt of St. John, the sea wall and fleur de lis which may be seen in the corner of the vault used by the French crusaders.

In 1799, Napoleon's attempt to besiege the city of Acre was

thwarted by the brilliant defense of Sir Sidney Smith. The failure to capture Acre marked the failure of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign. After a seige of 60 days, Napoleon was forced to withdraw, abandoning Palestine and returning to Europe. Thus ended his dream of conquering Palestine to India. In England a medal was struck as a numismatic tribute to Sir Sidney Smith.

Another medal with Acre background shows the Citadel of Acre with an Arabic date 1256 A.H. (1840) with the legend "Damascus Infantry Which Withstood the British Attack on Acre and Failed"; around rim 6 stars. On the reverse, in center, the Tougra of Sultan Abdul



Mejid surrounded by wreath. The silver was awarded to officers. Ordinary infantrymen received the brass issue. The medals were holed to be worn.



Two local issues are worthy of inclusion.

The first is the Masonic medal (MA-1 Haffner) of white metal, hand enameled in blue highlights. A scene of Akko from offshore in a central panel surrounded by Masonic seals and legends.

The final issue was a medal issue on the 25th anniversary of the Naval Academy of the State of Israel. This installation is in Akko.

The numismatic material of Akko is a small relic of the moving history of this ancient city. Looking at the coins we can imagine the frustrations of Alexander's warriors, the life of the Crusaders, the trials of Napoleon, the Haganah prisoners in the British prison, the surrender without resistance to the Israel Defence Army in May 1948.

You have to believe. Back in 1969 while walking in the souk (market) in Akko with my group from the Red Bus, I saw the mother of all slot machines. It was almost as old as some of the ruins. I put a 25 Agorat coin in the slot and pulled the lever. The antique gyrated, clanged and I'll swear hiccupped. Twenty 25 Agorat coins fell out. An Arab youngster said he never saw the machine give back even two coins. It was strictly a tourist trap. But, you must believe.

# When Palestine Was in Ashes: Mark Twain's Bleak Report

*From "Innocents Abroad," published in 1867.*

1981 Gold Medals



Of all lands there are for dismal scenery, I think Palestine must be the prince. The hills are barren; they are dull of color; they are unpicturesque in shape. The valleys are unsightly deserts fringed with a feeble vegetation that has an expression about it of being sorrowful and despondent. The Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee sleep in the midst of a vast stretch of hill and plain wherein the eye rests upon no pleasant tint, no striking object, no soft picture dreaming in a purple haze or mottled with the shadows of the clouds. Every outline is harsh, every feature is distinct, there is no perspective—distance works no enchantment here. It is a hopeless, dreary, heartbroken land.

Small shreds and patches of it must be very beautiful in the full flush of spring, however, and all the more beautiful by contrast with the far-reaching desolation that surrounds them on every side. I would like much to see the fringes of the Jordan in springtime, and Shechem, Esdraelon, Ajalon, and the borders of Galilee—but even then these spots would seem mere toy gardens set at wide intervals in the waste of a limitless desolation.

Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes. Over it broods the spell of a curse that has withered its fields and fettered its energies. Where Sodom and Gomorrah reared their domes and towers, that solemn sea now floods the plain; in those bitter waters no living thing exists—over whose waveless surface the blistering air hangs motionless and dead—about whose borders nothing grows but weeds, and scattering tufts of cane, and that treacherous fruit that promises refreshment to parching lips, but turns to ashes at the touch. Nazareth is forlorn; about that ford of Jordan where the hosts of Israel entered the Promised Land with songs of rejoicing, one finds only a squalid camp of fantastic Bedouins, of the desert; Jericho the accursed lies a moldering ruin today, even as Joshua's miracle left it more than

three thousand years ago; Bethlehem and Bethany, in their poverty and their humiliation, have nothing about them now to remind one that they once knew the high honor of the Savior's presence; the hallowed spot where the shepherds watched their flocks by night and where the angels sang, "Peace on earth, good will to men," is untenanted by any living creature and unblest by any feature that is pleasant to the eye. Renowned Jerusalem itself, the stateliest name in history, has lost all its ancient grandeur and is become a pauper village; the riches of Solomon are no longer there to compel the admiration of visiting Oriental queens; the wonderful temple which was the pride and the glory of Israel is gone, and the Ottoman crescent is lifted above the spot where, on that most memorable day in the annals of the world, they reared the Holy Cross. The noted Sea of Galilee, where Roman fleets once rode at anchor and the disciples of the Savior sailed in their ships, was long ago deserted by the devotees of war and commerce, and its borders are a silent wilderness; Capernaum is a shapeless ruin; Magdala is the home of beggared Arabs; Bethsaida and the Chorazin have vanished from the earth, and the "desert places" round about them, where thousands of men once listened to the Savior's voice and ate the miraculous bread, sleep in the hush of a solitude that is inhabited only by birds of prey and skulking foxes.

Palestine is desolate and unlovely. And why should it be otherwise? Can the curse of the Deity beautify a land?

Palestine is no more of this workday world. It is sacred to poetry and tradition—it is dreamland.



RUINS OF THE MURISTAN WITH THE CHURCH  
OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE IN THE BACKGROUND

1868

הורבות המוריסטאן וכנסית הקבר ברקע

**"IT WAS DOUBTLESS one of Caesarea's theatres,"** wrote the English missionary W.M. Thomson about Shuni in 1860, "and hither flocked the laughter-loving Greeks of Caesarea to enjoy the excitement of theatrical games and the pleasures of the open country at the same time."

Located on the southern tip of Mount Carmel, seven kilometres north-east of King Herod's great Mediterranean metropolis, Shuni was not merely a rustic weekend retreat. Just east of the site, across today's Binyamina-Zichron Ya'acov road, were the "immense springs" on which Caesarea depended, linked to it umbilically by the superb aqueduct familiar to modern sightseers.

The Roman theatre has recently been excavated, but even 130 years ago its one-time splendour was not lost on European visitors. Dr. Thomson described it thus:

"It is semicircular, and the 'chord' (diameter) is a hundred and sixty-six feet. The seats are all gone, and the 'cavea' (gallery) much changed, but the vomitories and vaults beneath are in good preservation, and are now used for stables and granaries by the peasants...The prospect over the wooded hills of Samaria and the far-spreading plain of Sharon is very beautiful."

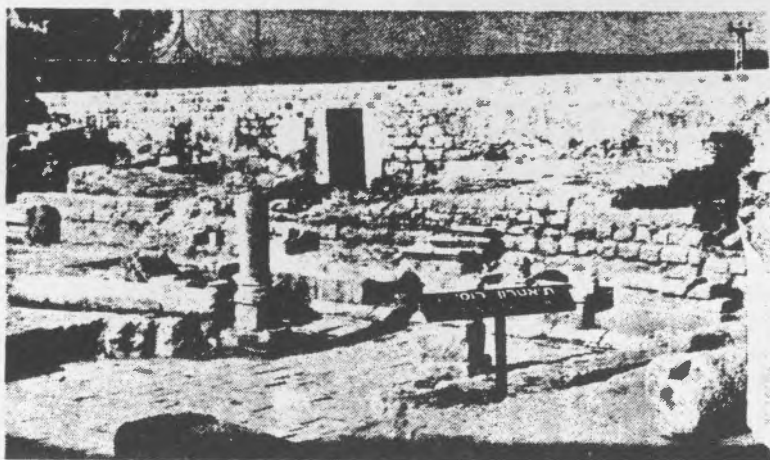
## Greek spa to Irgun hide-out

Mike Rogoff

It was not the splendid view alone, however, that attracted Caesarea's citizens to the place. As late as the 19th century, Shuni was still known in Arabic as Mayamas, a name that recalls the water rites of the Roman period, and apparently of early Byzantine times as well.

An inscription on a column found at the site honours Marcus Agrippas, a priest from Caesarea. The healing and fecund properties attributed to the nearby springs were recorded by the anonymous "Traveller from Bordeaux" in 333 CE. And remains of bathing pools with coloured mosaics, and a marble statue of Aesculapius, the half-divine physician of Greek mythology, reinforce the impression of a sacred spa.

In the fourth century, Rabbi Avihu of Caesarea condemned the licentiousness of the Mayamas water-rites, and admonished his fellow-Jews to avoid them. Whether he was heeded or not is not known, but



*Roman theatre at Shuni: 'Hither flocked the laughter-loving Greeks'*

it is certain that a Jewish community had struck root there in that period. A tomb inscription in Greek "Antonius and Kirus sons of Samuel" is followed by the Hebrew word *Shalom*.

The tentative scholarly identification of Shuni with Kfar Shemi of the Jerusalem Talmud draws strength from this evidence. Ancient olive presses and other industrial installations on the site of the Roman theatre confirm the continuing settlement. "There seem to have been many substantial buildings here about," wrote Thomson. "and, indeed, we are floundering over the grass-covered ruin of a considerable city."

THE NEWLY landscaped park of Shuni is dominated by an Ottoman citadel, built around the ancient remains. Eighteenth and 19th-century Turkish effendis viewed their tenanted lands through its fine, soaring arches. By the end of the last century it had become a khan, a caravanserai.

On the eve of the First World War it was included in a tract of land purchased by Baron Edmond de Rothschild, effectively linking the Jewish settlement of Zichron with Jewish holdings in the Hadera area. At once a group of young pioneers calling themselves the "Gideonim" moved in, but their dreams of renewed Jewish settlement were shattered by the outbreak of war.

It was not until after the war that any attempt was made to resettle Shuni. Called now "Givat Binyamin" after the generous Baron's

middle name, the estate became a training camp for the would-be founders of Binyamina, just to the south. In 1940, the nearby settlement of Tel Tzur, established not long before by the Revisionist Betar youth movement, relocated to Shuni, and began a new phase in the history of the site.

On any given weekend, the amateur archeologists at Shuni are likely to find themselves outnumbered by veterans of the pre-state Irgun Zva'i Leumi taking a trip down memory lane. For the latter, Shuni is no ordinary historical site: it is little short of a shrine.

It was an ideal choice. Its location was relatively remote, yet strategically central within the region as a whole. And the community of Tel Tzur, as something of a pioneering showpiece within the movement, gave Shuni a certain romantic attraction as well.

The intensive military training conducted at the site was not its only activity, however. It served the Irgun throughout the 1940s as its major base for landing "illegal" immigrants, and for operations against the British. Of the latter, the most spectacular by far was the Acre prison break of May 4, 1947, for which Shuni was the nerve centre.

The significance of Shuni for the latter-day ideological heirs of the Irgun is symbolic as much as historical. The 100-shekel note issued by Menachem Begin's government in 1979 carried a likeness of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, Begin's mentor, with the distinctive Ottoman arches of Shuni's khan in the background.



# A father's choice

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Aaron Sittner

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"MAKE UP your mind, Mister. What would you rather have – your son or the money?"

A threat by a kidnapper-extortionist? Not at all. In fact, I asked the question quite openly, within earshot of 150 people, and nobody lunged at me. No one raised an eyebrow. Nobody called the police.

It was all legitimate. You see, I happen to be a Cohen (priest), and I was officiating at the ancient Jewish rite of *pidyon haben*, the redemption of the first-born son.

The cheerful ceremony goes something like this: Invited guests – friends, neighbours, relatives, business associates or co-workers – gather in an auditorium, such as a wedding hall, or at the home of the newborn's parents.

Soon after they sit down at their dinner tables, but before the meal, the father carries his infant son over to the Cohen in a decorated tray together with a goblet of wine. Then, this dialogue:

Cohen (in any language): "Is the child you are holding the first issue from his mother's womb?"

Father: "My wife, who is Jewish, bore me this first-born infant which opened her womb."

Cohen (in Aramaic or Hebrew): "Which would you rather have, your firstborn son or five silver shekels?"

At this point, the father reaches into his pocket for coins or some object equal in value to five biblical silver shekels, and replies, "I prefer my son over these five shekels..."

and recites two appropriate benedictions.

He promptly hands the redemption "fee" to the Cohen who, in turn, hands the father his baby son.

"Your son is redeemed, your son is redeemed, your son is redeemed," cries the Cohen. Then, placing his hands on the child's head, he utters the familiar priestly blessing: "May the Lord bless thee and keep thee... be gracious unto thee... lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace."

With baby-boy back with his parents, everybody is happy and dinner is served.

ALTHOUGH *pidyon haben* is prescribed in the Bible (Numbers 18:16), it is not nearly as well understood or observed as circumcision, which applies to every Jewish male, first-born or not. As a result, many Jews subject to *pidyon haben* go through life without ever fulfilling it.

Must every first-born be redeemed? No – he must be the first-born to his mother, not his father. And that's not all. If the infant was born by caesarean section or following a miscarriage by Mom, there is no *pidyon haben*. Also exempt from the rite is a first-born whose father is a Cohen or Levite, or whose maternal grandfather is a Cohen or Levite. Sometimes, however, an exemption is cancelled and a *pidyon haben* is required, as when Dad is a Cohen who married a woman forbidden to him, i.e. a divorcee.

Why is a *pidyon haben* held on the 31st day after birth? That's because in Jewish law a child is not considered fully viable until he survives the first 30 days of life.

Suppose you are 85 years old and have never had a *pidyon haben*, and according to the rules, you should have had one. Is it too late now? Not at all; you may go to a Cohen anytime and redeem yourself. You can dispense with the dinner and the guests, but not with the five silver shekels.

The idea behind redemption of first-borns who "belong" to the Almighty is anchored in the VIP status given to them in the Bible. Immediately after the Exodus, for instance,

it was the first-borns rather than the priestly tribe of Levi who were assigned the sacrificial chores and other sacred duties. And in the Jewish laws of inheritance, it is the first-born who receives a double-portion legacy over his brothers.

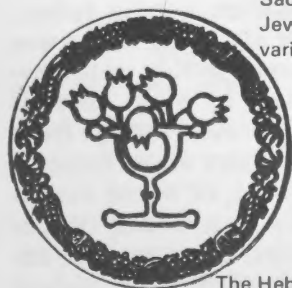
Finally, the five shekels (or their equivalent) given to the Cohen must have a current value of 5½ ounces of silver. Israel's Government Coins and Medals Corporation has issued a set of *pidyon haben* medals that conform to this requirement. In America, the usual token is five old silver dollars. Stocks, bonds, banknotes, cheques or deeds to real property may not be used.

## PIDYON HABEN



Obverse

The chalice that served the Temple and five pomegranates, symbols of the "Five Shekels of the Sacred Kind." These symbols were found on the ancient Jewish shekels. Around: a crown based upon the seven varieties (for which Palestine was praised).



Reverse

The Hebrew verse: "And their redemption when a month old shall you redeem – shall be by your valuation, five silver shekels, the sacred shekels" – Numbers 18:16. The inscription "Pidyon Haben Medal" in English.





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